

engagement surfaces for engaging the contents, and the first roller engagement surface has a coefficient of friction that is lower than the coefficient of friction of the second roller engagement surface.

54. An apparatus for processing a leading piece of mail having contents comprising one or more documents and a trailing piece of mail having contents comprising one or more documents, comprising:

an envelope opener operable to open the pieces of mail along at least one edge;
a feeder for feeding the pieces of mail to the envelope opener;
a thickness detector for detecting the thickness of the leading piece of mail;
a system controller operable to control the feeder to feed the trailing piece of mail in response to the detected thickness of the leading piece of mail to maintain the proper spacing between the leading piece of mail and the trailing piece of mail; and
an extractor operable to extract the contents from the opened pieces of mail;

55. The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the thickness detector is positioned between the feeder and the envelope opener so that the thickness detector detects the thickness of the leading piece of mail as the leading piece of mail is conveyed from the feeder to the envelope opener.

56. The apparatus of claim 54 comprising a singulator for separating the extracted contents and serially conveying the contents along the document path.

57. A method for processing a leading piece of mail having contents comprising one or more documents and a trailing piece of mail having contents comprising one or more documents, comprising the steps of:

feeding the leading piece of mail along a document path from an input bin;
opening the leading and trailing pieces of mail along at least one edge at an

envelope opening station;
extracting the contents of the opened pieces of mail;
measuring the thickness of the leading piece of mail;
determining the gap necessary between the leading piece of mail and the
trailing piece of mail based on the measured thickness of the leading
piece of mail, wherein the gap is sufficient to avoid interference
between the extracted contents as they are conveyed along the
document path; and
controlling the feeding of the trailing piece of mail along the document path to
provide the determined gap.

58. The method of claim 57 wherein the step of measuring comprises measuring the thickness of the leading piece of mail as it is conveyed from the input bin to the envelope opening station.
59. The method of claim 57 comprising the steps of conveying the extracted contents along a document path to a sorter for sorting the extracted contents into one of a plurality of bins.
60. The method of claim 57 comprising the step of scanning the contents to determine the orientation of the extracted contents.
61. The method of claim 57 comprising the step of separating the extracted contents and serially conveying the contents along a document path.
62. The method of claim 57 wherein the steps of feeding the leading piece of mail and controlling the feeding of the trailing piece of mail comprise serially feeding the leading and trailing pieces of mail from a stack of mail in the input bin.
63. The method of claim 57 wherein the step of opening comprises cutting the

pieces of mail open.

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64. A method for processing envelopes containing contents of at least three documents, comprising the steps of:
opening an envelope having contents of at least three documents;
extracting the contents from the envelopes; and
singulating the at least three extracted documents and serially feeding the documents along a document path.
65. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of singulating comprises the steps of:
conveying the documents extracted from the envelope in face-to-face relation into a nip formed between a first roller and a second roller;
driving the first roller and the second roller so that the first roller urges a first one of the documents forwardly and the second roller urges a second one of the documents rearwardly;
advancing the first document forwardly out of the nip while the second document remains in the nip;
disengaging the first roller from a drive source after the first document is advanced a pre-determined distance; and
re-engaging the first roller with the drive source.
66. The method of claim 65 comprising the step of disengaging the second roller from the drive source after the first document is advanced forwardly from the nip.
67. The method of claim 65 comprising the step of driving the first roller rearwardly after the first document is advanced away from the nip.
68. The method of claim 65 comprising the step of driving a third roller so that the third roller urges the documents forwardly while the documents are engaged